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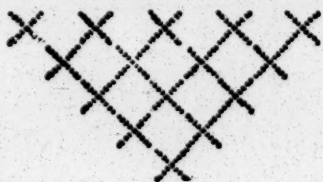
PRACTICAL PENITENT:

BEING INSTRUCTIONS

UPON FOUR OF THE PRINCIPAL
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS:

V I Z.

CONVERSION, CONFESSION,
HEARING MASS, AND HOLY
COMMUNION.



L O N D O N :

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE Public is indebted for the contents of the following sheets, chiefly to the religion and piety of a most respectable Lady, whose example and daily practice give the strongest evidence of the doctrine here offered to the faithful. She wishes to lie concealed herself, and to make known to others only the method, from which so much advantage is to be drawn towards proficiency in a spiritual life. The poor and ignorant are the chief objects of her zeal: if she is so happy as to promote an encrease of piety in them, she will think herself amply rewarded, and hopes for a charitable memento from them.

T H E

PRACTICAL PENITENT.

On Conversion.

NO *N* tardes converti ad Dominum, & ne differas de die in diem.—Delay not to be converted to the Lord, put it not off from day to day. (*Eccles. v. 8.*)

On the Necessity of Conversion.

THE affair of salvation is of that nature, that it cannot be deferred an instant, without the hazard of a miserable eternity. For what is the life of a man, says St. *James*, but a mere vapour, which appears for a short time and disappears? Yes, it disappears when one thinks the least of it. The sudden and unprovided death of many young persons, whose fund of good health

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promised

promised many long years, is enough to convince finners that it is rashness and temerity to reckon upon future days, years, or length of time. It was in meditating on these sudden and unexpected deaths, that St. *Cæsarius* of *Arles* instructing his flock, told them they were not to rely either on health or age, but to be immediately converted to the Lord : for it is always too late, says this holy Archbishop, to work for your salvation whilst you are uncertain of the hour of your death—What greater folly, says St. *Eucherius*, to defer that work to the doubtful extremities of a perishable and uncertain life, on which depends a happy or an ever miserable eternity ? And how can a prudent man, said the wisest of kings, put off from day to day his conversion to the Lord ? But to instruct you properly, dear Christian, on this important subject, let us beg the grace of our Lord by the intercession of her, who was full of it when the angel said to her, *Ave Maria*.

The enemy of our salvation usually makes use of the two following means

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to divert a sinner from his conversion, and make him put off from day to day this affair of the greatest importance to him.—The first means, is fear, by which he makes him believe he never can accomplish his conversion without a great deal of pain and trouble.—The second means, and which strengthens the first, is a false and presumptuous hope he gives him of one day doing penance and being converted at his will and pleasure. These then are the greatest obstacles, and the most ordinary hindrances, the devil makes use of to prevent the conversion of a sinner. Let us endeavour to destroy these impediments, and make the sinner sensible, that these very obstacles are the most powerful motives to make him enter immediately on his conversion.---If you acknowledge, dear Christian, that it is the difficulty of doing penance which obliges you to put off your conversion, I tell you it is the very reason why you should enter upon it; for the longer you defer it, the harder it will be. The reason of this is evident; for as many days, months, and

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years

years that you delay your repentance, so many new sins do you add to the former, which, says *St. Gregory*, not being effaced by repentance, become a weight which drags you on into other sins, or as the wise man says, become so many more chains to tie you down faster to them. Now as it is more easy to break one chain than ten, or to carry five than five hundred pound weight, so in the same manner the more you increase your sins, the greater is the load, the heavier is the burden. This made the royal prophet cry out, that the load of his sins was more than he could bear; and king *Solomon* upon it admonishes us, that the sinner will be taken in his iniquity, and will be bound fast by the chains of his sins, which by delay of repentance increasing day after day, strengthen more and more upon him. What an increase then of difficulties will there not be for the poor sinner, who delays his conversion from day to day, from month to month, from year to year, to break through all those chains of iniquity, which mutually increase the force of each

each other. King *Solomon* again remarks, that it is difficult to break a triple cord. How then can a sinner persuade himself, that he can break asunder those cords or chains that he has multiplied in proportion, as he has multiplied his sins, by delaying his conversion? From whence it is evident, that the quicker the sinner is converted, the more easy it is: and certainly one must be very blind indeed to imagine the more our sins are multiplied, the more easy to obtain pardon of them; as if I were to say, the stronger is our illness, the greater the complication of disorders, the more easy to recover. What an absurdity! How foolish is this way of reasoning!

For my part, I think the chief and the greatest obstacles to a sinner's conversion, is the distance he keeps from God, his attachment to the creature, and his criminal habits of sin. Now who of you here present does not clearly see, that it is easier to be converted when one begins to leave God, when the human passions begin to sprout out, and criminal habits are but in embryo, than

when by sinning one has lost all sight of God, when the object of human passion becomes the very idol of the heart, or when the sinner has been long buried in the sink of iniquity, and has multiplied his criminal habits. It is all abuse to think so, it is all folly to believe or hope by delay to find an easier task in one's conversion.---Agree with me, then, dear Christian, that the first pretext a sinner makes use of to delay his conversion, should be the very motive that should engage him not to defer it a moment longer. For, judge yourselves, is it not a folly in the extreme, to defer an affair of the last importance, difficult in itself, to a time when it will become more so? Did you ever see a man unable to carry a small weight undertake to carry a much greater? Who would not laugh at his folly? I leave it to you to adapt this example to the present case of a procrastinating sinner, it is easy for you to comprehend and apply it.

We may justly conclude, that the fear of repentance, far from being a motive of delay, is the very reason why
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a sinner should not defer it ; nay, on the contrary, it should oblige him, if he reasons right, not to put off his conversion a single day. But what for the sinner is the most terrible, is that wilfully remaining in his sins for years and years, hearkening not to the voice of God, who by his ministers has so long solicited his conversion, renders, by his delays and contempt of God's graces, his return not only more difficult, but terrible to say it, he actually puts himself in a moral impossibility of ever being converted. He gradually falls from abyss to abyss, from sin to sin, from bad habits to custom, which engenders a second nature, a kind of necessity followed ordinarily by despair, till at last it leads him to the very gates of hell.--- This is what the great *St. Augustin* inculcates in his confessions, relating the difficulty he had to enter on his conversion. What more then is necessary to engage you to make no further delay, but to have immediate recourse to a spiritual physician, and to a remedy for your unhappy soul? For it is with illnesses

of the soul as with the illnesses of the body, the more one neglects them, the more difficult they are to be cured : it even so happens, that by neglect at last becoming inveterate they become incurable in spite of all remedy then applied.---Agree then with me, oh, unhappy sinners, that the difficulty you find in your conversion, and which hinders you at present from effectually undertaking it, ought to be the most powerful motive with you to enter upon it ; since it is self-evident that the longer you delay it, the more difficult task it will prove. If then, you have a mind to save your soul, lose no time, set to work on this important, ah the most important affair for you in this life, and for the next.---Let us now examine the second motive the devil makes use of to delude a poor sinner, and engage him to postpone his conversion from day to day.

The other stratagem the enemy of our salvation makes use of to persuade a sinner to put off his conversion, is a false and presumptive hope he suggests to him,

him, and with which he amuses and flatters him, that he may be converted and return to his duty where and when he pleases. This, oh this, deceit, without any exaggeration, has damned an infinity of poor souls. Let us then destroy this artifice of the devil, as we have done the former, that the unhappy sinner, who has so long delayed his conversion, may not be further deluded, nor postpone what it imports him to do immediately.—To become truly penitent, to be sincerely converted, three things are necessary, *viz.* time, grace, and fidelity there unto, without which conversion is impossible; nevertheless these only means are often refused to a sinner, who despises God and the frequent advice he has given him, and who may justly expect he will be deprived of them in that critical moment he quits this life and enters upon eternity.—First then, as to time, you know there is nothing more uncertain, than these fleeting hours, in which we live. For there is not a man upon earth who can be assured of an hour, no, not even
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of a moment, it is only God himself who prolongs, shortens, or cuts the thread of life, at his own will and pleasure ; and who tells us in the gospel, to be always ready, for we know not the day nor the hour he will come. (*Mark*) In this great incertitude what reasonable man would risk an affair of consequence, and put it off for another day. It is true that in the ordinary disposition of Divine Providence, a certain number of days and years are allotted to man ; but this quantity of days, this measure of time, is utterly unknown to him. Some live a longer time, others a shorter ; the Son of God holds the keys of death and life, of which he disposes as he thinks fit.— But I will suppose a person informed by the Almighty of the number of his days, it will never be a sinner to whom this will be revealed, who would make no other use of it, but to plunge himself the deeper into sin and iniquity. On the contrary, we read in the holy Scriptures, and even have examples before our eyes, that when the sinner is enjoying perfect health, when he is doing

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ing what would prolong his life, when by plunder and rapine he is amassing riches, and filling his coffers, that then the Son of God, his sovereign judge, will cut short his life, and demand an account of all his injustices and debaucheries. Thus was the rich man mentioned in the gospel, lost and every thing perished to him. The Evangelist St. *Luke* brings him in speaking in the following manner to himself. Oh my soul, thou hast gathered together great riches for many years, now rest yourself, now eat and drink, and indulge yourself in all pleasures. But the Son of God says to him : Oh fool that thou art, this very night thy soul is demanded of thee, die thou must. To whom will now belong all those riches thou hast gathered together ? Oh fool that thou art !—Here take notice, the Evangelist does not say, thy soul will, but, is demanded of thee ; to signify to us, that at the moment this man thinks he is enjoying perfect health, and flattering himself with an imaginary succession of many years, death comes in an instant,

instant, and in a moment snatches him away. Oh fool that thou art ! Where now are your years to come you promised yourself ? Where is the time you relied upon ? Oh vain hope and confidence ! In effect, what greater folly than to see a sinner postpone his conversion to a future day, with as much assurance as if he had life and death at his command. Certainly this bold, this insolent behaviour of this delaying sinner, undoubtedly deserves to be punished by a refusal of further time to do penance in. Wherefore the Almighty, for having so ill employed the time he had granted the sinner, denounces by his prophet this woful sentence : those men of blood who will not only ruin the body, but also by their libertine and scandalous lives, destroy the soul ; and those men of blood who wallow in the sink of debauchery and infamous pleasures, deaf to all advice and repentance, as also all those deceivers and seducers of the widow and the orphan, and who are in this world for nothing else than to be wicked ; all those shall never attain to half
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their age : the Lord has spoken. On what can you now ground your hopes of a future time ? Moreover if the fruitless tree mentioned in the gospel of St. *Luke*, which for three years brought nothing, is ordered to be cut down and cast into the fire, as uselessly occupying the land, what is to become of all those trees of malediction, all those sinners who for so many years have not only brought forth no good fruit, but every day and hour have been increasing the number of their sins by the number of their days ? Have not they all the reason in the world to dread this terrible sentence suddenly falling upon them ? Cut this tree down, says Jesus Christ, and cast it into the fire, it only abuses the time I gave it, there shall be no more time for it. Cut it down, throw it into the fire, oh sinners tremble ! The axe is at the root. In effect, what appearance is there that Almighty God should preserve and prolong the life of that sinner, who by delaying his repentance, turns into derision all that is denounced against him ? Who by fresh sins increases
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the wrath of heaven, and who makes use of further time but to flee in the face of his Maker. What must you be bad, because God is good? Is it thus, says *St. Paul*, that you contemn the riches of his bounty, his long patience, and his delay in punishing you? Know you then, that if you continue in that hardness of heart and impenitence, you are gathering together a treasure of wrath, and of revelation of the just judgment of God; that is to say, you are making a weight of sin, that will draw down on your heads a heap of the wrath of the Lord in the day of your judgment. Wherefore if after so many sins, so much delay, so much abuse of time, the Almighty should, by a particular favour, grant you a prolongation of time, it should be the most powerful motive for you to do penance therein: for as the same apostle admonishes us, that it is horrible to fall into the hands of the living God, by an unprovided and unexpected death; and if even a just soul cannot reckon upon a day, hour, or minute, much less a sinner, who for so long

long a time has provoked the Divine Justice to cut him off and throw him into hell fire. Oh sinner, sinner ! on what can you ground your reliance of a future day ? All vain illusion, all deceit of the enemy of your soul.—But suppose you were secure of future time to repent in, what security have you gotten, that that grace will not be wanting to you in those moments, which would render your repentance efficacious and valid ?

It is an article of our faith, that without the grace of God we can neither do penance as we ought, nor be truly converted to the Lord our Maker. Now tell me, oh unhappy sinner, who has promised you this grace ? Almighty God, in the disposition of his Divine Providence, makes use of two sorts of grace, the one extraordinary, the other ordinary and common ; the extraordinary graces he gives not to all, the others, even though ordinary and common, are not always given at all times and in all places just as you please : besides this kind of grace often times produces no effect. Wherefore as you see,
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to secure your repentance you will stand in need of an extraordinary grace ; but as a sinner who has long delayed his conversion, can he persuade himself that he shall have this grace just when he pleases ? Can he believe any such thing ? Is it not the greatest rashness and presumption to hope it ? What promise has Almighty God made you of it ? Has he ever given you his word for it ? Do the holy Scriptures intimate any thing like it ? On the contrary, they in a most serious manner admonish you not to delay your repentance, and that if you do, the wrath of the Almighty will suddenly overtake you.—No, no, Almighty God has not promised his grace to any sinner who has hardened his heart in iniquity, who has so long resisted and abused it. All his promises are to those sinners who entering into themselves, acknowledge the sad state of their souls, are ready to accept the first grace offered, and to improve the same. These cry out in the bitterness of their souls, lift up their hands to the Almighty, lament their sad state, and crave assistance from
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the bountiful mercy of God. But far otherwise does it fare with those ungrateful wretches, those procrastinating sinners, those self-sufficient and rash presumers on the patience of God. To these I find no such promises made; but on the contrary, I learn from the prophets, the apostles, the doctors of the church, and in a particular manner from the first chapter of the book of Proverbs, the wisdom of God, that a sinner who has refused to hear the voice of God calling him by his ministers to repentance, and has disobeyed the same, the time will come when this same sinner, who has set at naught this grace which was given him, will cry out, will beg, will pray for this help so necessary to him, and cry in vain, that God in his turn will not hear him, will laugh at him in his distress, and insult him in his ruin. Tell me now, and you shall be judge, is there any appearance, any ground, that a sinner, who wilfully persists in his sins, and has long, though rashly, persuaded himself, that he can have grace at his will and pleasure, has
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any chance of obtaining it? No certainly, and were it to be otherwise, what an encouragement to vice, what an inlet to all manner of crimes, and perseverance therein to the last moment of our lives. No, no, dear christian, this contempt, this abuse of grace, Almighty God generally punishes by withdrawing the same. Thus, for example, a person who has made sacrilegious confessions and communions, Almighty God permits them to die without the sacraments. Another who has despised the word of God and the charitable zeal of his ministers, God permits that he shall die without their help. Another who has stifled in his breast the calls of the Almighty, the sting and remorses of conscience he has often favoured him with, God permits he shall die in despair. Another whom neither a miserable eternity, nor the vengeance of God hanging over his head, nor any thing could move, God permits to drop asleep into hell. Wherefore you that refuse the present grace and the call, he now offers you, with what confidence can you hope to
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have them, when you want them? They will be withdrawn from you in punishment of your refusal and temerity. You shall call, and I will not hear you, you shall seek me and you shall not find me, you shall die in your sins. Oh rueful sentence, woful judgment! Tremble!—But you will tell me, God has shewn mercy to sinners in their dying moments. Yes, says St. *Augustin*, he shewed it to the good thief on the cross; but take notice, says this holy doctor of the church, God shewed it once, that nobody might despair, and *only once*, that no body might presume. But you imagine Almighty God has done it oftener. What authority have you for it, St. *Augustin* denies it. But I will suppose that God in his mercy, for particular reasons, has on some occasions granted the grace of repentance to some in their dying moments; but will you not acknowledge he refuses it to many others, the number of which is much the greater, and whom we daily see die without sacraments, die in their sins. Of which number shall you be? You will undoubtedly say; I shall perchance
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be of the number of those to whom mercy is shewn : and I say unto you, perchance you will not. Where are you then ? But if God should then give me the grace, I shall do penance. But if he should refuse it, what becomes of you then ? What, will you put to hazard an affair of the utmost importance to you ? You who would not risk your temporal concerns on a mere chance ; what, would you risk your eternity, your soul, your salvation ? O great God, where is the spirit and wisdom of christians now a-days ! How different from those of the primitive times, who risked every thing, nay, lost their lives and every thing, sooner than put their salvation and eternal happiness to the hazard of a chance !

But I will suppose you are certain of time, nay even of the grace necessary for your conversion, yet, are you sure you will be better disposed to cooperate with the grace of God, in your conversion at any future time ? I suppose you think so : for my part, I believe nothing of it. I could here bring
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you many substantial and solid reasons to shew, that if your will is not now disposed to make use of this grace which Almighty God now offers you, there is no reason to believe you will correspond to it hereafter. For whatever hinders you now, will further prevent you at another time, and the difficulties which increase with your sins, your days and years, will at last become unconquerable to you. But say you, am I not master of my own will? I am resolved to do penance at such a time. Oh the vain reasoning of the sinner! What is more uncertain, more inconstant, than the will of man? How many things in your life have you promised to do, and never did them? That is, as you tell me, because you changed your mind; and what assurance have you, that in regard to your present resolution of a future conversion at that time you will not change again? Let me tell you, no man can ground himself upon his own will to do a good action; and if he rests himself thereon, he will soon find himself mistaken. Even if you were in the state of grace, and should rely

only on your own good will, it might be the very cause of your fall. Nay, a just man cannot be secure of his will to do good, much less the sinner. What hopes have you then of a future conversion from this your fickle and changeable will? Do you really think this will of yours will be more submissive to God and his graces hereafter, than at present? it cannot be expected: for whatever difficulty you have now, it will be greater hereafter. Your multiplied sins will have more force upon you, will strike deeper root. The spiritual illness of your soul will become more inveterate and harder to be cured. The devil will gain greater strength over you, and bind you faster to him; your debts in the sight of God will be greater, and he less disposed in your favour. All this you cannot deny. Where are your hopes of a future conversion? Besides, is it not just that you should not be able to do then what you would, in punishment of not having done now what you could. Moreover the will of the sinner, who puts off his conversion from day to day, is strengthened,

ened, not only in the habit of sinning, but also in the habit of putting off his conversion, by which at last it becomes a moral impossibility of ever returning to God by a sincere repentance. For depend upon it, that fatal habit of procrastination which domineered over him in life, will domineer over him at his death. During life he would, and he would not ; he would be converted, not at present, but afterwards ; so at his death he would be converted, but not just yet. The only difference will be in the different lengths of time. Formerly he put off his conversion from year to year, now on his death-bed it is put off only from day to day, or from hour to hour. In effect this man is dying, the priest is called, he comes, he exhorts him to return to God, to repent, to save his soul ; but he tells the minister of God, he has just then a violent head-ache, his fever is redoubled, begs him to come later ; when the priest comes again, he is put off with some other such frivolous excuse, and is desired to come the next day ; but in this interval the sick man

dies without confession, conversion, or repentance. But I will suppose he lives to the next day, makes some kind of confession in an unprepared way, in a precipitate manner, without a sufficient contrition, and scarce knowing what he says, and thus he dies. Such a confession, such a conversion, do you think capable of expiating the numberless sins of this unhappy soul? If you ask the greatest saints, they will answer you no, because, say they, it is but just that God should abandon him at his death, who never would think seriously of being converted to God in his life.

Wherefore, dear christians, and all unhappy sinners in particular, I beg, I pray, I conjure you by every thing that is sacred in heaven, or dear to you upon earth, delay not your conversion a moment longer. Take, oh take the certain, leave the uncertain. The certain part is to be immediately converted; the uncertain, is to defer it to another time. But why should you defer an affair of such consequence to a future day? When you know not what may happen

happen to you hereafter. Life, as I told you, from St. *James*, is a mere vapour that appears and disappears like smoke. Grace is at the command of no mortal whatever. The will of man is fickle and inconstant. To conclude, the gospel tells us, that of all those sick, lame, and infirm, who lay about the *Piscina* (or fish-pool) only he was cured, who immediately jumped in when the angel had put the waters in motion, to give us to understand, that our salvation depends on our immediate concurrence with the divine grace. Hasten then yourselves, and follow what the prophet tells you, that if to-day you hear the voice of God, wait not till to-morrow. Have immediate recourse to the salutary waters of the *Piscina*, of the sacrament of penance, to recover the grace of God, to secure your souls, to attain your eternal happiness, which God of his infinite goodness grant me, and grant you all. *Amen.*

ON CONFESSION.

Instruction.

CONFESSION is one of those actions the most solemn, the most serious, which we perform during the course of this mortal life. In performing it, we call upon Almighty God himself as our witness, and to whom we confess; we call upon his saints and angels before whom we confess; we call upon the sacred minister of the Almighty, who holds in his hands the keys of heaven, and at whose feet we kneel. What more august, what more solemn? Who would think a confession could be ill made, attended with such sacred rites, and such awful invocations? Yet, alas! how shamefully is confession, even of a long standing, often huddled over! In what a thoughtless, negligent manner is it but too often performed? How many confessions, either through wilful ignorance, or for want of sincerity, humility, contrition, and true sorrow,
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are invalid and criminal, and on a future, though terrible, day, will rise up in judgment against those, who made them. Oh, reflect then in the most serious manner on this, before you undertake a work of this importance.

First Part.

FIRST, let your intention be sincerely to amend your life, to recover the grace of Almighty God, and be re-instated in your claim to the fruits of your redemption by the Son of God. Secondly, let your examen of conscience be rigorous, and impartial. If you are ignorant of the duties of your station of life, and the sins thereof ; if you are ignorant of habitual sins, spiritual and interior sins, sins of omission and commission, sins of injustice, or others, apply for instruction to God's vicegerents, or your ignorance will be imputed to your guilt. Thirdly, when you have thoroughly, sincerely, and without flattering yourself, duly examined your conscience, do not think the work is done : for it is not enough

for a good confession, to plead guilty, nor even to condemn your sins, except by a thorough sorrow you utterly destroy and put an end to them : for in this sorrow doth the validity of your confession essentially consist. Nor will the desire of it suffice ; you must have it in good earnest, and the want of it cannot be supplied by any other way. Till you hate sin, there is no peace to be made with God, no pardon to be had. Now this sorrow is to be obtained by fervent prayer, by humbly begging of it thro' the merits of Jesus Christ, by duly weighing the grievousness of sin, the heinousness of your ingratitude to your Maker, and the deformity it has, and brings to yourself, and to your own dear soul. Thus will you raise in your heart a contrition and sorrow for your sins : and endeavour all you can, that this sorrow may be a perfect one in the sight of God ; such an one as proceeds not so much from the fear of hell, or the hope of heaven, or the deformity of sin itself, as from the sense you have that sin offends God, and is injurious to his

his Supreme Majesty, and contrary to that infinite bounty, which deserves the love of all.

Nor will this your sorrow yet avail without another condition annexed to it ; it must be effectual, that is to say, accompanied with a firm purpose never to commit mortal sin more upon any account whatsoever, neither for the avoiding any evil, or acquiring any good. Wherefore it is not sufficient to say, *I would* amend my life, you must say, *I will* ; for of such that *would*, hell is full : as heaven is of such as *will*. And of this resolution alone the devil is afraid, when you go to confession, so that as he turns all his forces upon you to hinder it, so ought you to exert your whole power to make it, begging God Almighty's succour, by whose grace all things are possible. Above all you are to know, that this resolution must be strong enough to make you avoid the more immediate occasions of sinning ; to wit, all those dangerous temptations under which you are used to fall, when you put yourself into them. If such a

house, which you frequent, if such a companion, with whom you associate, if such a woman, for whom you have a criminal friendship, gives you an occasion of sin, either leave off going to confession, or make a resolution so sincere, so strong, so efficacious, as may make you shun such a house, avoid such a companion, or every other occasion of sin whatever it may be. Say not, it is enough if I promise to sin no more. Say not, what signifies my breaking off such, or such a friendship, such, or such a familiarity. Oh, rather say, I care not for heaven, I would rather lose the friendship of Almighty God, than sacrifice such an attachment, such a friendship, such a connection. Thus will you say what is true; but ere long you will find to your cost what a miserable exchange you have made.

Second Part.

Secondly, in confession you are to appear clothed with humility and confusion. Reflect on the greatness of the Divine

Divine Majesty, and your sinful soul, your ingratitude, your infidelity, &c. You must be very proud indeed, if these thoughts humble you not : this humility will make you lay open your faults sincerely and fully, without excusing them, and without laying the blame on others ; it will prevent you from changing those confessors who reprove, and tell you the dangerous condition your soul is in. That patient has no great mind to recover, who seeks for an ignorant physician to cure him. What then must be thought of you, if on purpose you chose a dumb kind of director, that is like one of those ministers, whom God reproves by the mouth of his prophet *Jeremy*, saying, they did not discover to you your iniquity, to bring you to repentance. If this be your conduct, it is necessary to tell you, that you have no true sorrow for your sin, and but little concern for your soul.

Third Part.

Thirdly, consider what remains for
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you to do after confession towards God, towards your neighbour, and towards yourself.

As to God, do not fail to render him most humble thanks for having been pleased to restore you to his favour, and for reversing that sentence of eternal death, which would otherwise have stood out against you for your sins. After that, you are to make new protestations of fidelity to him, as your sovereign Lord, imploring his assistance in fortifying your weakness against all further assaults of temptation. As to your neighbour, you must consider whether you are not obliged to some restitution, either of his reputation, or his goods, which you are bound forthwith to make unto him. For deferring it without sufficient reason, is a new sin even in those, that have really a mind to make it. Further, if your sinful life has scandalized and occasioned your neighbour's fall, repair it in every shape you can, that the damnation of his soul may not lie at your door, or his sins be added to the load of your own sins and iniquity.—

ty.—As to yourself, endeavour seriously and devoutly to perform the penance enjoined you, as soon as you can. Then think of the best means to prevent your returning to sin. These means are three, prayer, avoiding the occasions of sin, and frequenting the holy sacraments. By the due use of which you will certainly obtain the grace of persevering in good. Renew then your good purposes of recommending yourself, at least every morning and evening, to God Almighty, to our blessed Lady, to your angel-guardian, and to the saints your patrons, that you may continue firm in your resolutions, never to commit mortal sin any more. Resolve to return no more to such a house, to be no more alone with such a person, to break off wholly such a connection, such a friendship, such a habit as by their lewdness, debauchery, intemperance, swearing, lying, drunkenness, may lead you again into sin. Finally, resolve to confess as soon as ever you have been tempted again to any new sin, and to fortify yourself more and more against the assaults of the devil,

vil, by the weekly, monthly, or frequent use of this holy sacrament, and that of the blessed Eucharist. But as you love your soul, you must resolve to beware of making use of this sacrament itself to sin with more liberty, as some unhappily do ; who, if they relapse, and find themselves under the necessity of going to confession, sin on without restraint, as if it would cost no more to make but one word of it, and so put all as it were into the same reckoning. Now what can be more injurious to God, or more prejudicial to your own soul ? Injurious to God, because you make use of that very blood to multiply your sins, which he prepares in this sacrament to destroy them ; more prejudicial to yourself, because thus you are never sure of making a good confession : and when you do confess as you ought, there remains usually in the soul many most pernicious effects of the past sin, as in a person recovered from a fever there remains many relics of the late malady ; and if nothing else remains, the ill habit remains, which is one of the greatest impediments

impediments to salvation. Do you then understand this, you that say, you will commit this, and the other sin, and will afterwards confess it? The more sins you commit, the more difficult will it be to be saved, even though you should make a good confession: for on the one side, the mind grows more and more clouded, the will becomes more hardened, and you render yourself more and more unworthy of the Divine assistance. On the other hand, as you grow weaker, the devil grows stronger, and that force, which was sufficient against a few sins, is not so against many.

The Prayer.

OH God, who art the sovereign dispenser of life and death, in whose hands is the lot of all creatures, I confess that the fittest punishment for my repeated sins ought to be blindness; after so many iniquities, I deserve to remain insensible, and incapable of sufficient sorrow for a good confession, and the obtaining my pardon. But for thy own
fate,

fake, dear Lord, do what I cannot hope thou wouldst do for mine. Tho' I deserve not to receive this sacrament worthily, yet this sacrament deserves to be worthily received. If I deserve not to serve thee, thou deservest however to be served. Thou that didst heretofore weep over my misery; thou that in the garden of olives didst lament over my sins with tears of blood, grant me, dear Lord, in virtue of those tears and that blood, true contrition, a sincere purpose of changing my life, and a firm resolution of avoiding all occasions of relapsing. Turn to me, oh my God, and I will return to thee. — Heal me, dear Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, O Jesus, and I shall be saved. What can, Oh Lord, be a fitter object of thy mercy than my misery, and how can the abyfs of my iniquities be swallowed up, but by the abyfs of thy goodness! Full therefore of a holy confidence, I beg thy grace, that after thou hast with thy blood washed away all my iniquities, I may in heaven for ever glorify
thy

thy holy name, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

The method of devoutly assisting at the holy and august sacrifice of the Mass.

Instruction.

TO hear Mass devoutly and with profit to your soul, you must unite yourself to the priest, who offers to Almighty God this most holy sacrifice, and at the same time propose to yourself the four principal ends, for which it was most mercifully instituted by Jesus Christ, our amiable Redeemer.

The four Duties.

First, to render to God that infinite honour due to him, and in acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion over you. Secondly, to pay to divine justice a due satisfaction for all your sins and offences, from your first use of reason to this present

present moment. Thirdly, to render to the Almighty a just tribute of thanks for all benefits received at his bountiful hands, from your baptism to this very time. Fourthly, to obtain of his Divine Majesty a continuance of his graces, and final perseverance to the last moment of your life. Moreover when you assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, remember that you perform in a certain manner the office of the priest, who offers this sacrifice in your name, and invites you to join in prayer with him to the Almighty, to beg of him to accept of his and your sacrifice: offer it then conjointly with him to the great and glorious Lord God of Heaven and earth.

Now to reduce into practice what we have already said, you must do as follows: in the beginning of the Mass, you must humble yourself at the foot of the altar, recite the *Confiteor*, casting an eye on your conscience, exciting yourself to an act of contrition, humbly asking pardon for all your sins, and imploring the assistance of heaven, in order to hear this
Mass

Mass with devotion, respect and spiritual profit to your soul. Then make the following prayer.

Preparatory Prayer to God.

OH Father of mercy, and God of all consolation, who not content that thy only beloved son should die on the cross for our sins, but hast been pleased to continue this supreme sacrifice in thy holy Catholic church to the end of ages, grant that we, who have the happiness to assist at this adorable mystery in the Mass, may partake of the happy effects of the same, thro' Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth one God with thee, world without end. *Amen.* Then say,

To our blessed Lady.

OH pious mother virgin *Mary* who stoodest under the cross of thy dying Son, and with him offeredest to the eternal Father the sacrifice of his body and blood for the redemption of mankind, be pleased to assist me here present

sent at the renovation of that adorable mystery, that helped by your prayers, I may offer up to his Divine Majesty, in this Mass, a worthy and acceptable sacrifice, and receive in my soul the salutary fruits thereof, thro' Jesus Christ, our Lord, *Amen.*

Division.

After that, divide the Mass into four parts, that you may acquit yourself of the four debts you have contracted, which answer to the four ends for which Jesus Christ has mercifully instituted this august sacrifice of the Mass.

First Part. The Instruction.

In the first part from the beginning to the gospel, propose to yourself your first obligation, which consists in honouring and praising his Divine Majesty, to whom all honour and infinite praise is due. Wherefore humble yourself with Jesus Christ, and sink down in the thought of your nothingness in the presence of this his infinite Majesty. Bow
your

your head, bend your knees, lift up your hands to Heaven, acknowledge your misery, poverty, and weakness, and crave of Jesus Christ the grace to hear this Mass with all that exterior and interior modesty, attention, and devotion, it deserves. Then say,

Prayer of adoration.

Oh my God, I adore you, and acknowledge you the Lord God of my heart and soul, I confess, and openly profess, that all I am, all I have, all I possess, proceeds entirely from your bountiful hands, and the goodness of your heart to me. But as your Divine Majesty deserves all honour and glory, and a homage of infinite value is your due, and since my poverty, wretchedness, and misery, debars me from making you from myself a suitable offering, I here offer unto you all the humiliations and homage, which Jesus Christ offers to you on this altar ; and what Jesus your beloved Son doth here, I also do : with him I humble myself before your infinite

nite majesty ; with him I profoundly adore you ; with him I join in the same humiliations and the same sentiments ; and I sincerely rejoice to see you infinitely honoured for me, by your most holy Son, in the renovation of this adorable sacrifice of the Mass.

Instruction.

Here shut your book, and pour forth your soul in many devout acts and congratulations, to see God so worthily honoured, as he is by the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Say,

Aspirations.

Oh great God, I feel an extreme satisfaction in the infinite honour that redounds to your Divine Majesty, from this holy sacrifice.

I am penetrated with more joy than I can express, at the honour which is here paid you.

Oh all ye heavens, all ye just souls, all ye choirs of angels, and celestial spirits, join with me in glorifying, by this
holy

holy sacrifice of the Mass, this great God of Heaven and earth, this sovereign Majesty, this Lord of glory.

These, or other such like words and acts may you make use of, to express the piety and fullness of your heart, and thereby pay your first debt of homage and adoration.

Second Part.

From the gospel to the elevation endeavour to acquit yourself of your second debt, which is that of satisfaction to the divine justice, for the number and grievousness of your sins. Say then with a contrite and humble heart,

Prayer of Propitiation.

Behold, my God, behold in me the sinner, the traitor, the perfidious wretch, who has so often rebelled against you, so often insulted your divine law, so often abused your merciful goodness. But alas, how confounded am I now at the sight of all my sins, and penetrated with the deepest sorrow! I detest them, I abominate

minate them, and having no due satisfaction of my own to make you for them, I offer unto you the precious merits of Jesus your divine son. He in his goodness undertakes to satisfy your divine justice for me, by sacrificing of himself anew on this altar. I therefore offer to you his merits, by offering to you the blood of that same Jesus, true God and true man, who in quality of victim is pleased to renew in this Mass his sacrifice for my benefit, and in favour of me. And since he is willing to be my mediator and advocate, and by his blood to solicit my pardon at the throne of your Divine Majesty, I humbly presume to unite my petition to that of his most precious blood, which the love of us drew from his sacred veins. It is therefore with confidence, that I present to your seat of mercy this very blood, begging it may cover the multitude of my sins, and efface the heinousness of my crimes, in the sight of your Divine Majesty. This blood of Jesus claims your mercy, and my poor contrite heart begs the same. Oh my God,
and

and dear Lord, if my tears of compunction move not your mercy, those tears of blood of Jesus can you resist? That mercy, with which, at the death of Jesus, you signed the redemption of all mankind, cannot it in virtue of the same blood upon this altar obtain mine for me? Yes, yes, I hope it will. I hope this sacred gore on this altar of propitiation will blot out my iniquities, and cleanse me from all my sins, and which I shall not cease to bewail to my last expiring moments.

Instruction.

Here again shut your book, give scope to your pious thoughts, form in your heart the most perfect act of contrition, a contrition the most lively, the most sincere. Then say,

Aspiration.

Oh most amiable Jesus, give to my eyes the tears of *Peter*, to my heart the contrition of *Magdalen*, to my soul the grief and compunction of all those
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who from sinners became truly penitent in your sight, that deploring my crimes at this divine sacrifice of the Mass, I may obtain a general pardon, the true and sincere wish of my heart and soul.

Make many such like acts of humiliation and penance while Jesus Christ is on the altar, by whose mediation you may hope to pay that debt of satisfaction, your sins have contracted in the sight of his eternal Father.

Third Part. The Instruction.

From the elevation to the Communion, you are to discharge your third debt of gratitude for the immense, the singular, the innumerable favours you have received from his Divine Majesty. Offer him then in return a gift of infinite value, I mean, the body and blood of Jesus Christ on the altar, and invite all the angels and saints to join with you in thanksgiving to him for his boundless goodness to you, in acknowledging the immense favours he has so liberally bestowed

bestowed upon you, and in blessing his holy name for ever and ever. Say,

Prayer of Oblation.

Oh most beneficent and bountiful God, who has so tenderly loved me, could I but love you with a love suitable to your merit ! Could I but repay those favours you have heaped upon me ! Oh, could I make a proper return for all your gifts and graces ! But though willing, I own I am incapable : for what am I ? Nothing. What have I ? Nothing. What can I do ? Nothing. Yet, dear Lord, will I pay this debt in all the rigour of your Divine Justice. Receive then, oh bountiful God, in payment of this debt, in acknowledgment of your favours, in testimony of my gratitude, receive this sacred blood, receive this adorable body of Jesus Christ, this pure, this holy, this immaculate victim I here offer you, by the hands of your priest and minister, on this altar of mercy. This offering you cannot refuse, this offering cannot but be pleasing to you, it is of infinite

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value

value in your sight, and equals all the gifts and graces you have liberally poured out upon me. Receive then, dear Lord, what I here offer unto you, with the most grateful heart and unbounded thanks, I beg all the angels and blessed saints in heaven to join with me, in glorifying your holy name, and returning you infinite acts of gratitude, for the immense favours I have received from your unspeakable goodness to me.

Instruction.

Oh with what a sweet and favorable eye will this God of mercy receive this testimony of your gratitude, this offering of so great a value. Offer him at the same time not only this Mass, but all the Masses that are celebrating all the world over. Offer him all those thanks full of love that Jesus Christ offers for you in this adorable sacrifice. Thus will you pay this debt of retribution for all the lights, the graces, favours, gifts, care, and indulgence shewed to you now, or you may hereafter expect

expect to receive from his bountiful goodness to you.

Fourth Part. The Instruction.

In the fourth part of the Mass, from the communion to the end, you will communicate spiritually, when you have not the happiness to communicate in reality. To accomplish this, you must first form in your heart a lively sorrow for all your past sins. Secondly, you must conceive an act of divine faith of the real presence of Jesus Christ on the altar ; and add to these a fervent act of divine love and an ardent desire to be united to Jesus Christ, whom you will most lovingly invite to take up his residence spiritually in your soul. Then say,

Prayer of spiritual communion.

Oh loving and tender father of all mercies, it grieves me, it grieves me to think how much I have offended you, how long I have resisted your holy grace, how bold I have been in sinning

in your pure sight. You are my sovereign good, ah goodness itself, worthy of all the affections of my soul, and of all the souls that ever were, or will be, created. What would I not give that I had never sinned against you, at least will I die sooner, than ever offend you more.

Oh amiable and adorable Jesus, I firmly believe you really present on this altar, yes, I firmly believe that the sacred host and chalice contain your immaculate body and your sacred blood, with your soul and divinity really and substantially present. I love you above all things, increase my love of you. Come, oh come, dear Jesus, into my poor soul, sanctify it by your holy presence, enrich it with your graces, and accomplish my desires of receiving you in me. Oh my beloved, I languish, I sigh after you. Come, oh desired of all nations, come, take possession of my soul, reign in my heart, and may I love nothing but you.

Instruction.

Instruction.

Here stop a while, and to increase your devotion, represent to yourself our blessed Lady, or any one of the blessed saints or angels presenting you with a sacred host, humble yourself profoundly at the thought of so august a visitor, and in your heart tenderly welcome your beloved, and form the following act in your interior.

Prayer.

Oh my dear Jesus, the true friend of my soul, I love you from the bottom of my heart, and with all the powers and faculties I am capable of. What return can I, poor creature, make for all your goodness to me? May I never be separated from you, may I never be so unhappy as to lose you, the tender object of all my wishes, love, and desires.

Instruction.

After this spiritual communion, think that God is within you, cherish him in
C 4 your

your soul, entertain him, and beg of him all manner of graces, not only those which may secure your salvation, but even those extraordinary graces which may make you eminently holy in his sight, and by which you may glorify God upon earth, as he is glorified in heaven. For since you offer to the eternal Father his divine Son, the greatest offering that can be made ; ask, and it shall be given ; knock, and the treasure of all graces shall be opened to you. Then say,

Prayer of Impetration.

Oh great God of heaven and earth, I acknowledge myself unworthy of your favours. I freely confess, that at the sight of my multiplied sins, I deserve not to be heard. But here, here is your adorable Son, can you refuse to hear him, who on this altar prays to you for me ? Can you deny any thing to this sacred blood which pleads for me at the throne of your divine mercy ? In consideration then of my offering of him, in consideration of his prayer for me, and at the
sight

fight of his precious blood in the sacrifice of this Mass, grant me, dear Lord, all and every grace you know in your eternal wisdom to be necessary for my salvation, sanctity, perfection, and your greater glory. Grant me also, dear Lord, a general pardon of all my sins, and blot out all my iniquities; give me a horror of sin, and fill my soul with compunction. In flame my heart with your divine love, and bestow on me that inestimable grace of final perseverance in good to the last breath of my life. Still further I beg of your Divine Majesty all those virtues the most heroic, all those helps the most efficacious, for obtaining that degree of sanctity which will be most pleasing to you. Still further I also crave, dear Lord, the conversion of all infidels, sinners, and all enemies of your holy name, in particular of all those who are any ways related to me. Moreover I conjure your merciful goodness to release all the poor souls in purgatory, that it may be said, that this divine sacrifice of the altar has virtue enough to clear all those receptacles of punishment

of all their prisoners. In fine, dear Lord, convert all those souls formed to your own image, dispersed all over the face of the earth, that this miserable world may be changed into a paradise of piety and sanctity, and all our hearts into so many temples, wherein you may be loved and adored in this world, and eternally glorified in the next. These petitions I put up to your throne of all mercy, they are inspired by your adorable Son, they are aided by his sacred blood and merits; and oh, eternal Father, let not a soul perish for whom Jesus Christ shed the last drop of his blood and died.

Reflection on spiritual Communion.

Instruction.

As spiritual communion is much recommended, it is proper in a few words to explain the nature and happy effects of the same. St. *Thomas*, that great light and doctor of the church, tells us it consists in an ardent desire of receiving Jesus Christ, and in an affectionate and tender embracing him in our souls, as if one
had

had really and substantially received him in the blessed Eucharist.

The happy effect thereof is an increase of the love of God, and a further channel of divine graces, and helps and endears one more to our blessed Redeemer. In effect how pleasing these spiritual communions are in the sight of God, his Divine Majesty was pleased to manifest to St. *Joanna* of the Cross, informing her at the same time, that in every spiritual communion she received an additional grace, like in a certain manner to that which she received in her real communion. Moreover the church of God, assembled in the holy council of *Trent*, praises much these spiritual communions, and invites all the faithful to the practice of them, as very useful to encrease piety and devotion, and to further them on the road to sanctity and perfection. Hence it is that all pious souls accustom themselves to the practice of this holy and spiritual communion. The blessed *Agatha* of the Cross, eminent in all virtue, usually made two hundred in a day, and the pious *Lefevre*, one of the first companions

of St. *Ignatius*, declared it to be the best preparation to succeed well in our real communions.

Exhortation.

We therefore with the church exhort all those to practise this spiritual communion, who are desirous of advancing in the love of Jesus Christ, and are earnest in the pursuit of virtue, sanctity, and perfection.

Practice.

Yes, dear souls and beloved of God, practise this at all the Masses you hear; at all the visits you make to the blessed Sacrament, at all times of the day, morning, noon and night. The practice of it is so easy, says the blessed *Joanna* of the Cross, that by an elevation of your heart and soul, you may make it without any person taking notice of it; it does not require to be fasting, it does not require any particular leave of your director, an act of the love of God is all that is necessary. You may make the following

following one, or any suitable to your devotion, but let it be from your heart, in spirit and truth.

Prayer.

O Adorable Jesus, I firmly believe you really present in the blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and desire to possess you with all my soul; and since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually and take possession of that heart which was made for you, to whom I unite myself as if you were effectually come, and abandon myself entirely to you, suffer me not ever to be separated from you.

Another Prayer.

I believe you, dear Lord, present in the most blessed Sacrament. I adore you, I love you, I desire you to come into my heart. I unite myself to you. Never separate yourself, dear Jesus, from me, though a sinner and unworthy of your visits.

Another

*On Hearing Mass.**Another Aspiration.*

Oh dear Lord, may my soul be absorbed in the sweetness, the ardour, the force, of your divine love ; that I may die for the love of your love, who vouchsafedst really to die for the love of my loving you. *St. Francis.*

Another Ejaculation.

O Love that is not beloved ! Oh Love but little known. *St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzis.*

Another Aspiration.

Oh divine spouse of my soul, when will you ravish my heart, and make yourself master of my soul. *St. Peter of Alcantara.*

Possession.

Oh Jesus, my love, my only happiness ; come, take possession, and my soul possess.

Act of Reparation.

An act of reparation for all those who
are

are inrolled in the confraternity of the perpetual adoration of the blessed Sacrament.

Prayer of Adoration and Reparation.

Oh my God, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the fulness of my heart, in the depth of all humility, I adore you with all your infinite perfections in the blessed Sacrament of the altar, hoping I may in some measure atone for the many irreverences, impieties, and insults, that are, or have been, offered to this adorable mystery, ever since it has pleased your Divine Majesty to institute the same. Yes, my dear Lord, I adore you in this sacrament of love, not as much as you deserve, or as I ought, but at least in as much as lies in me by your holy grace, and with a sincere desire of doing it in all that perfection you can render a creature capable of. Assist me then, dear Lord, to pay to you on this altar the homage that is due to you.— Oh all ye angels that surround this tabernacle of love, join with me in adoring him

him here present, in blessing his holy name, extolling his mercies, and exciting our gratitude for so signal, so precious a bounty.

Impetration, Reparation, and Atonement.

O dear Lord, fill every breast with these sentiments of love, gratitude, and adoration. Extend this confraternity of the perpetual adoration to the furthest extremities of the earth. May I, and all the members of it, faithfully, fervently, and lovingly, acquit ourselves of this duty of homage towards your Divine Majesty here present, to the end of all time. I adore you, my God, here, and every where; and on every altar, whereon you rest in this adorable Sacrament. I adore you in every Mass, that is said all the world over, in every procession, in which you are carried, in every exposition, that is made of you to the faithful, and in every communion, in which you are received. I adore you in place of all those unhappy and blinded souls, who have not, nor do not, nor will not in future, adore you. I adore
you

you for all those, who neglect to approach to these divine mysteries, or have unworthily approached to them in mortal sin. I adore you for all those, who have received you, but turned their backs upon you, and drove you out again by sin and sinful habitudes. I adore you, dear Jesus, to atone for all those irreverences, or indecencies, committed in your churches, and in your sacred presence. I adore you in reparation of all that neglect, indifference, coldness, and tepidity, with which you are shamefully treated in this adorable sacrament of love. In fine, I adore you, dear Jesus, for all those who know you not, for all those who know you, and adore you not ; for all those who shut their eyes against this miracle of love, who question your power, and deny this wonderful effect of your bountiful goodness and mercy towards us.

Lastly, I adore you, dear Jesus, for the whole world, and present to you, in the full extent of the desires of my heart, as many acts of faith, of love, of adoration, of thanksgiving, of reparation, and of atonement ; as many, I say, as others
may

may produce acts of disbelief, of impiety, of blasphemy, of neglect, of contempt, of scorn and derision; wishing, with all my soul to love, to bless, to adore you as much as those miserable creatures have offended, or may offend and dishonour you. This act of mine, I beg, dear Lord, may be united to that whole adoration which is ever paid you, by your triumphant church in heaven, by your militant church on earth, and by your suffering church in purgatory; that by this union of adoration, you may be worthily praised, honoured, and glorified for all eternity. All I beg, dear Jesus, for myself, is that particular and efficacious grace, to make me diligent in approaching this adorable mystery; that grace, to receive it most worthily; that grace, which will render me pleasing to you; and that grace, by which you will make your abode in me; that when I come to die, I may have you with me on your seat of mercy, from whence I hope to be spared, when I must appear before you on your seat of justice. Then call me, dear Lord, to you; place me on
your

your right hand, that I may bless you, glorify you, and adore you, with all the saints and angels in heaven for all eternity.

An Act of hourly Adoration.

Lord Jesus, in union with all those praises, adorations, satisfactions, and prayers you offered to the eternal Father whilst here upon earth, and which you continue to offer him daily in the blessed eucharist, I profoundly adore you in this august sacrament; and to render still more agreeable to the eyes of your Divine Majesty these acts of adoration, homage, and praise, I also unite them to all those of our blessed Lady, your sacred mother; to all those of your celestial spirits, to all those of your beloved saints in heaven, and to all those of all the pious souls upon earth, who perpetually adore you in this mystery of love, in spirit and truth.

Glory to God the Father, who created me; glory to God the Son, who redeemed me; glory to God the Holy Ghost, who has taught me all truth, and placed me in the holy catholic church.

Of

Of Holy Communion.

BEFORE communion, consider in the first place, the greatness of the mystery, look through those miraculous species of the Host, and contemplate the majesty of that God, that lies concealed under them, that comes down from heaven to visit you, and to make of your heart a living tabernacle, where all the fulness of the Divinity dwells.— Reflect seriously upon this new prodigy of love, and struck with admiration at the sight of these marvels, you may cry out with greater wonder than the mother of St. *John Baptist* did, when she was visited by the Holy Virgin ; Whence is this, that the mother of my God doth come to me ? (St. *Luke*.)

Next, have a true sense of the obligation you lie under, to dispose yourself to communicate worthily, and to prepare for your Saviour a habitation fit for him : for you are not to prepare an abode for man, but for God himself. (St. *Gregory*.)
With

With all care then examine the state of your soul, and the disposition of your heart; try yourself, according to the precept of *St. Paul*, and see if there be nothing in your breast, that may be offensive to the purity of the Holy of Holies: for wo be to you, if of a heart polluted with sin, dedicated to the devil, you should make the temple of the Lord.

If then upon examination, you find your conscience defiled with any mortal sin, approach not this dreadful mystery, till you have first purified it in the tribunal of penance: there it is the Apostle will have you, by all means, to examine yourself before you partake of the blessed Eucharist.

But to comprehend yet further to what purity of mind so holy an action engages, consider in the second place, that Jesus Christ, as if he were not satisfied with bare visiting you in the communion, will after the strictest manner even be united to, and incorporated as it were with you, by giving you his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink: for the effect

effect of this divine Sacrament, is to transform in a manner those that receive it into Jesus Christ himself, and to make them the same with him. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, says our Saviour, dwells in me, and I in him. (St. *John.*) Take great heed therefore, that there be nothing in you unworthy of Jesus; but above all, have the greatest abhorrence for sins of impurity; because in dishonouring your own body, you dishonour the body of Christ. St. *Ambrose* and St. *Augustin* seemed amazed at the humility of the Son of God even in the blessed Virgin's womb; what then would they think of an unclean sinner, who dares to receive the Holy of Holies in an impure breast? Communion, according to the holy Fathers, is but an extension of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Second Part.

Consider when you are going to communion, that though the first disposition, which consists in purifying ones soul from all sin, be sufficient to receive the
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body of Jesus Christ not unworthily, yet if you will partake of that abundance of grace that is annexed to a fervent communion, you must endeavour to prepare yourself more particularly by a sensible and actual devotion.

To make the practice of this more easy, I will reduce all the affections of the mind to three sorts of acts, by the means of which you may raise yourself to this actual devotion, during the time of communion. First enter into a sense of the most profound humility. By a lively faith represent to yourself the infinite Majesty of God really present in the blessed Sacrament, before whom the blessed Spirits tremble with awe and respect, then look back on yourself, and there behold your own misery and lowliness, and confounded with the honour Jesus Christ does you, say from the bottom of your heart, with the centurion in the gospel, Lord I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof. (*St. Matth.*) Lord I am not worthy to receive thee, but I presume to come unto thee, that thou mayst make me worthy. Lord I
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am weak and infirm, but I come to thee to be strengthened and cured. Have mercy then upon a miserable creature; say unto my soul, that thou art her salvation, and that alone will be sufficient to heal her.

After this you must excite yourself to acts of love and confidence, and to make them the more lively and tender, consider the obligations you have to love Jesus Christ, who in the sacrament of the blessed Eucharist gives to you such sensible marks of the love he bears you. Pray, could he extend his kindness farther, than by preparing this sacred banquet? Where he himself becomes your nourishment, where the remembrance of the death he suffered for you is renewed, where your soul is filled with grace, and where you receive a pledge of your future glory.

Ah shall you not then love him, who has so much loved you? Shall you not confide in him, who by giving you himself, gives you all things? Imagine that our blessed Saviour, at the instant of your communicating, should ask you,

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as he did *St. Peter*, lovest thou me? Surely you ought to answer with the same apostle: yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, and if I had not hitherto loved thee, as I ought, I will not henceforth live, but for the love of thee. Lastly, excite in yourself a longing desire to receive Jesus in the holy communion: for this bread of angels, says *St. Augustin*, requires to be eaten with hunger and appetite; and as one of the best dispositions to thrive by one's victuals, is to eat them with a good stomach, so this heavenly food will bring forth marvellous effects in your soul, if you receive it heartily, and with a holy impatience to unite yourself to your Saviour. Shew him then your great desire and forwardness, by these words of the royal prophet, that suit so well with a good christian at the time of his approaching the communion: as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. And tasting beforehand the happiness you will have in possessing Jesus, say with the spouse in the Canticles, I have found him
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whom my soul loveth, I hold him and will not let him go. With these dispositions are you to come to this holy table, if you desire to partake of that abundance of grace, the Father of all mercy fails not to shower down on all those who communicate with fervour and devotion. After receiving consider Jesus in the midst of your heart, offer him your profound respect and worship, thank him with an humble acknowledgment, for the inestimable benefit of receiving him in the holy communion, and remember you have within you the inexhaustible fountain of all good. Make right use then of so favourable a minute ; and since your dear Jesus is not come into your heart with this fulness of grace but to bestow it plentifully, with confidence lay open to him all your necessities, shew all your weaknesses, and be not ashamed to discover all your infirmities ; you cannot have a more seasonable time to treat with God : lose not therefore the least moment of it. If any disorderly passion has seized upon your heart, beg succour of him to rid yourself

yourself of so dangerous an enemy. If the violence of customs, or ill example, or human respects, have hitherto hindered you in your pursuit of virtue, beseech him most earnestly to fortify you by his victorious graces, by virtue of which the greatest difficulties vanish. If thro' your own negligence and remissness, you have lost the spirit of fervour, and the relish for the things of God, intreat him earnestly to rekindle in your soul the flame of his divine love, which giving you an aversion for all other things, may make you find no delight henceforth, but in an inviolable attachment to his divine service. In short, whatever wants you may have, struggle with your dear Lord Jesus, and use with him an agreeable and holy violence to supply them, after the example of *Jacob*, who said to the angel : no, I will not, O Lord, let thee go, till thou hast given me thy blessing. I will not, O Lord, let thee depart, till I have obtained of thee the grace that is necessary to overcome my passions, to keep thy law, to serve thee as thou deservest, and to live and

die in thy favour. Endeavour now to be fully convinced of this truth, that the greatest unhappiness that can befall you, is to prove ungrateful to your benefactor, and to force him by your unfaithfulness to leave you. What a confusion would it not be to you, if Jesus, after having sanctified your soul by his real presence, after having nourished you with his body and blood, should have just reason to complain, he had plentifully bestowed his favours upon an unthankful person? It may be he has but too often reason to make this complaint against you. For how many times have you shamefully turned him out of your heart, to make place for his mortal enemy, sin and the devil? Beware of putting hereafter so great an affront upon your God. Look well before you, so as to avoid for the future what may be an occasion of your relapse; suffer nothing in you that may divide your heart between Jesus and the creature; and whilst he is within you, make him a sincere and solemn promise, that nothing in
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this world shall be able to separate you from his divine love.

Prayer.

OH sweet Saviour of perishing mankind, behold a miserable sinner whom the hand of thy justice has so often spared. Instead of dealing with me as thou hast done with so many others, who are burning in hell, and bewailing the abuse of this adorable sacrament of thy body and blood, thou dost yet in spite of my ingratitude come to visit me, and returnest into a heart from whence I have so often excluded thee, to make place for thy enemy. Nay, am I not yet so unhappy as to have still some secret sin, that may render me unworthy of thy bounty ? Am I not yet a *Judas*, by giving thee to day the kiss of peace, to betray thee again to-morrow ? Am I not still of the number of those, who receive thee in the holy communion, only to crucify thee again ? Oh dear Lord, suffer it not to be so. If I have been an unfaithful, a perjured, and treacherous

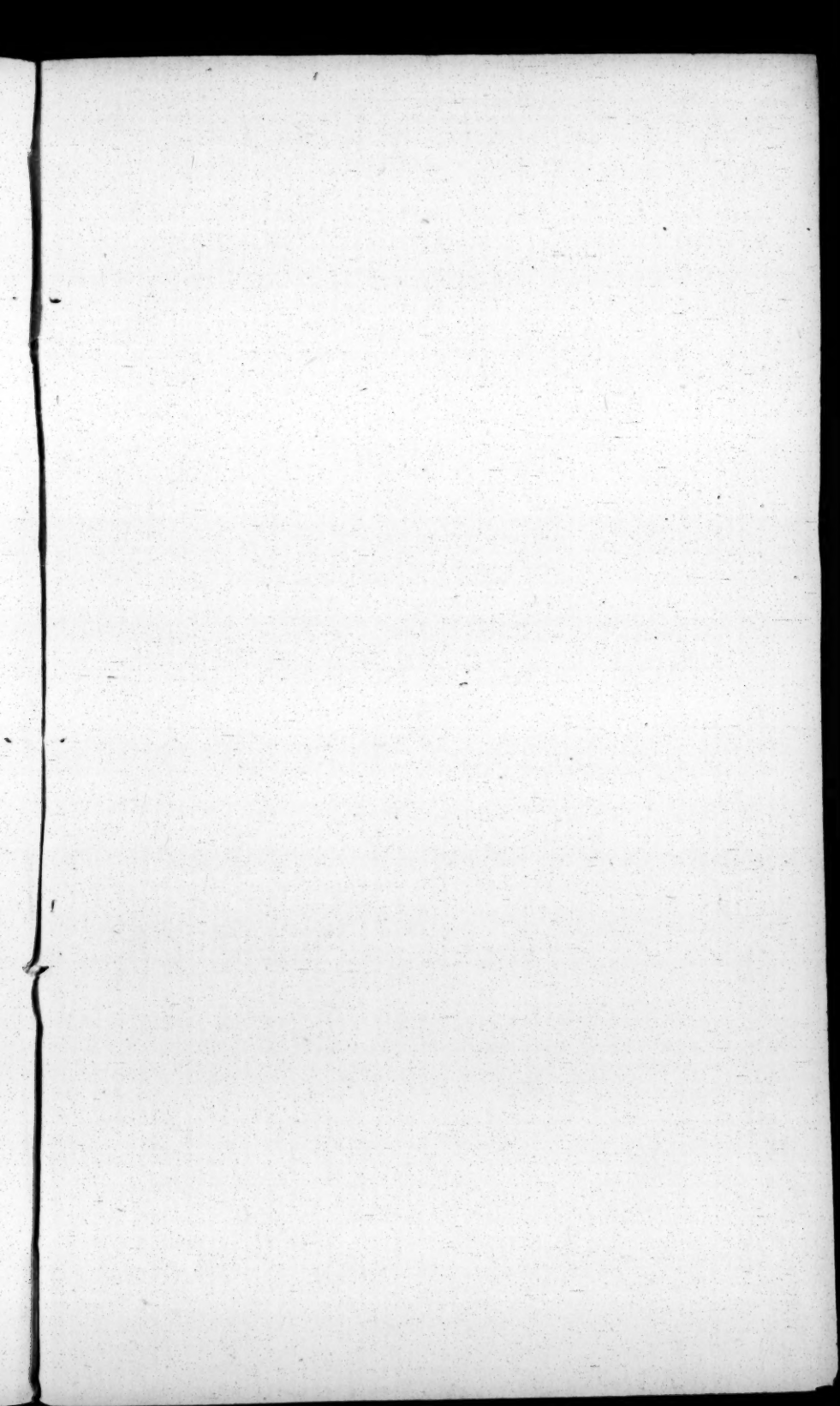
soul hitherto, pierced with the sharpest sorrow, I fall prostrate at thy feet to beg thy pardon, and to swear to thee from this day forward an inviolable fealty. By the motive alone of thy love, I hate and detest whatever there is in me that has displeased thee. I desire that all the powers of my body and soul that have served hitherto to offend thee, may not be employed hereafter, but to publish thy goodness and bounty. These eyes that are the witnesses of thy marvels in this august sacrament, these eyes guilty of so many sinful glances, shall serve henceforward to deplore my infidelity. This tongue, which thou hast sanctified by the touch of thy holy body, shall be no more the instrument of calumny and detraction, of impurity, or abusing thy holy name. And this heart, which thou hast chosen for thy temple and tabernacle, shall be no more polluted with those wicked desires, which have so often caused thee to withdraw thyself from me.

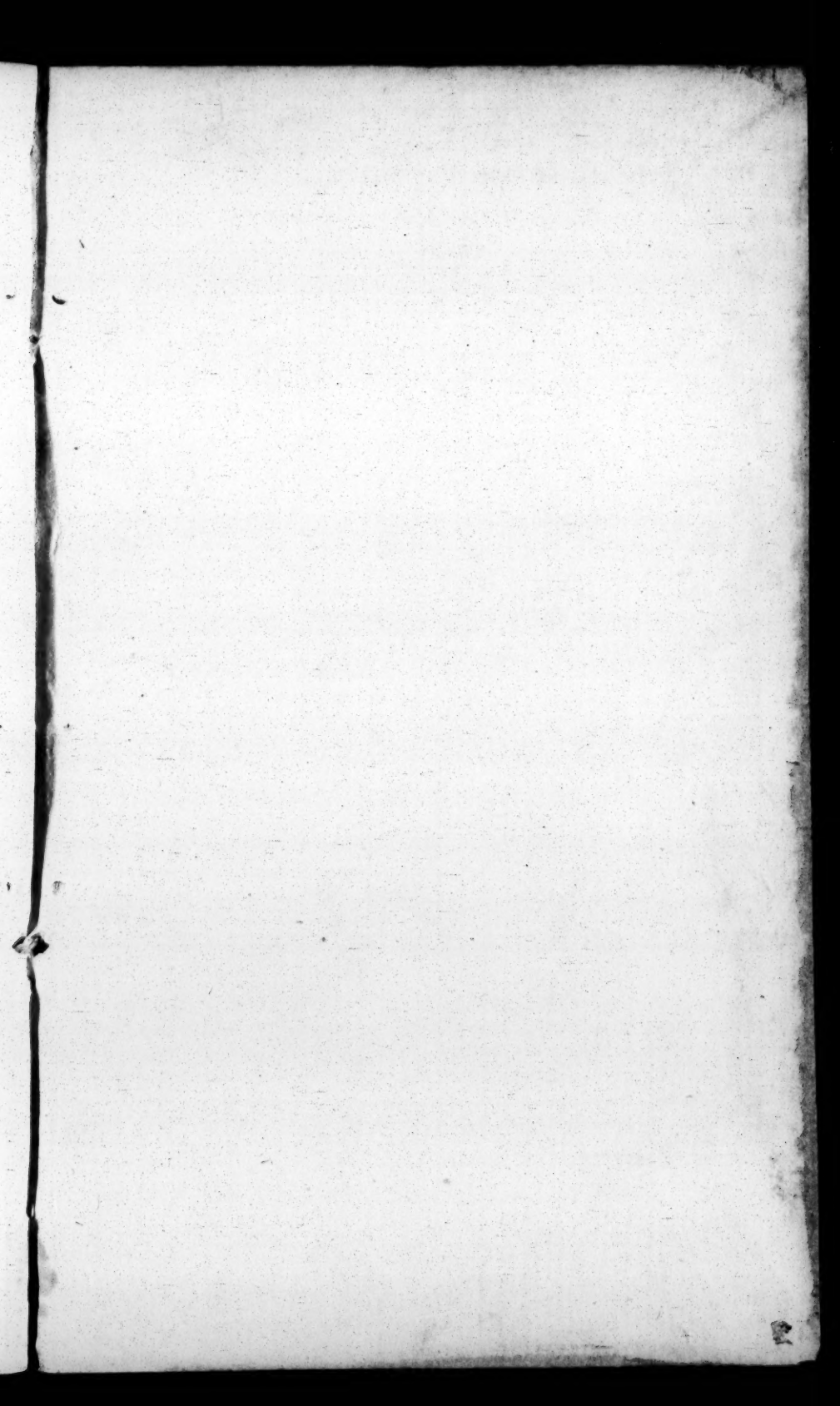
Come then, dear Lord, make no more delay, come and take possession of a
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soul that desires to live no longer than for thee. Come and confirm all the promises I have made to thee, and let this divine sacrament, which I am about to receive, be the seal of them, never more to be broken by me. This grace I beg of thee, O my God; so that having the happiness of possessing thee even in this life, I may enjoy thee eternally in the next, who livest and reignest one God world without end, *Amen.*

F I N I S.







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